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## Suit drive donations add to DOC's re-entry efforts

*From Staff Reports*

Searching for a job can be harrowing experience, doubly so for a convicted felon with little or no resources. In Louisiana, more than 15,000 individuals are released from state prisons and parish jails each year. While many offenders may have acquired educational, vocational or work skills while incarcerated, many don't have any money to buy the basics upon release.

During the months of September and October, people all across Louisiana will have the opportunity to contribute to the Men's Wearhouse National Suit Drive. The suit drive is a community call to action to donate gently used, professional clothing to be distributed to male offenders leaving the system without the monetary means to acquire such attire.

Donations can be dropped off locally at a Men's Wearhouse retail location at 7151 Youree Drive, Shreveport, and the retail store at 4756 Pecanland Mall Drive, Monroe.

The lack of appropriate interview and work clothing can and does affect a person's ability to get a job no matter how well trained, according to the Employment and Training for America's Homeless Best Practice Guide.

"The Department has been working diligently over the last few years to provide re-entry services to offenders that will prevent their return to prison," explained Department of Public Safety and Corrections Secretary James M. Le Blanc in a news release. "The suit drive reinforces department's efforts since a key to successful re-entry for offenders is finding and maintaining employment."

George Zimmer, founder and CEO of Men's Wearhouse, believes no one should be denied the opportunity to work because they lack appropriate interview clothing. "We are asking the community to join us in our efforts to help our neighbors in need take important step toward self-sufficiency," Zimmer said in the news release.

The Baton Rouge-based statewide non-profit group, Refined By Fire Ministries, Inc. (RBF), will coordinate the donations and work with DOC on allocating clothing to adult and juvenile male offenders upon release.

"Assisting in the facilitation of this outstanding collaboration fits hand-in-hand with our organization's mission and newest initiative, Re-entry Benefiting Families which connects offenders and their families to resources in their communities. We look forward to this becoming an annual event," said Scott Huber, general manager of Operations for Stupp Corporation and Refined By Fire Ministries, Inc.'s board chairman.

### **How it works**

During September and October 2008, people can drop of their "gently used" interview and work appropriate clothing (preferably on hangers), including belts and shoes, to any of the following Men's Wearhouse retail locations in Louisiana: New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Lake Charles, Shreveport and

Monroe.

All donors will receive a tax receipt and a 10 percent off “thank you” coupon from Men’s Wearhouse. Men’s Wearhouse will match the community’s efforts by donating a new dress shirt to Refined By Fire Ministries re-entry program for each professional item of clothing that is donated by helpful members of the community.

“The department is very appreciative of the generosity shown by Mr. Zimmer and Men’s Wearhouse as well as Refined By Fire Ministries,” Le Blanc said. “This partnership will give hope to thousands of men actively seeking a better future for themselves and their families.”